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GERMAN COMPOSITION.

Selections for German Composition with Notes and Vocabulary. By CHARLES HARRIS. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co. 12mo, pp. vi, 143.

Macmillan's Course of German Composition. First Course: Parallel German English Extracts and Parallel English German Syntax. By G. EUGÈNE FASNACHT.

Materials for German Prose Composition, with Notes and Vocabulary. Simple Narrative, by H. C. G. VON JAGEMANN. New York: Henry Holt and Co. 12mo, pp. vi, 120+168.

Elements of German Syntax with special reference to Prose Composition; by H. C. G. VON JAGEMANN. Henry Holt and Co. 12mo, pp. vi, 170.

Elementary German Prose Composition. Selected Passages from Modern English Authors for Translation into German with Notes, Grammatical Appendix, Tables illustrating the order of words in German, and a complete vocabulary by E. S. BUCHHEIM, Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1893, 12mo, pp. viii, 108.

THE appearance of several works, the preparation of which has been in part contemporaneous, shows the increased interest in the subject of writing German. It is obvious that instruction in German composition must be different in material and method from that in the classics of our college days, if a real acquisition is to be made by the student and not a mere mastery of dry forms. The exercises should be graded, practical, interesting, the living speech of living men in the familiar expression of thought.

Several of the grammars in most common use are scientific and philosophical in character, and afford no aid to the student in acquiring the power of expression in the language itself, either in speech or writing. In such cases, the scope of a German prose must be extended, and include a statement of the choice and use of words and idioms, which cannot be obtained in a dictionary. Certain rhetorical and stylistic helps are also not out of place. It is useless to turn the student loose to select the appropriate word in his lexicon. A foreign word apparently

identical in meaning may be very different in application.

A manual of this kind should, therefore, contain a vocabulary, guiding the student skillfully to the choice of the proper meaning, also some statement of principles to supplement the grammar, unless the student is to search outside the contents of his book for the needed information. Even then, and possessing some knowledge of the order of words, he may be helpless, unless he has some memory of a thought similarly expressed. To give a student a thought and words to use mechanically like counters, before any true feeling for the language has been acquired, is beneficial only in the lowest degree. Therefore, extracts embodying the higher style of prose are often worthless; they contain so much of the individuality of the author that they are not true to popular expression, and even if the pupil should learn laboriously to write any such formula, it would be useless as an acquisition, as he would never have occasion to use it a second time.

This leads us to emphasize the fact that the expression of English thought differs in itself from German, and only selections which admit of natural transmutation into German should be selected for a work of this kind. Extracts heretofore have been dull, stilted or so full of repetitions, that no interest was aroused. The thought should be progressive, not rest in itself, and hence continuous narrative, description or dialogue, should be chosen for such exercises, and these should not exceed in difficulty the German which the pupil has already read. English prose of a century ago has an archaic coloring at the present time. Letters of the early part of the present century seem quaint to us now. Many makers of manuals of prose composition have not been mindful of the deep distinction between the language of literature and of ordinary speech.

Harris' 'German Composition' contains a series of graded exercises, in general admirably chosen, with introductory and narrative extracts and a selection of letters. The editor's method of furnishing exercises for re-writing, based upon selections in German which contain the vocabulary and suggest the proper idioms, is scientific and valuable. Language,

if learned at all, must be learned from language either spoken or written, and no pupil can evolve it or determine what it should be. Language *is*, and is employed in certain ways, and it is the province of the text-book to show what this usage is.

It is our fixed conviction that any attempt to teach the writing of a foreign language save by transcription is labor lost. It ignores the fundamental principle of how language is acquired. Thought expressed either in speech or writing is purely a matter of imitation.

Certain fixed forms and analogies must dwell as types in the mind according to which all other expressions are fashioned. It is contrary to experience to assume as one of these editors does, that the scholar who has studied German for a year has attained such a feeling for the language, and such a discrimination in the use of words of related meaning, that his translation of difficult extracts, pervaded by un-German idioms, can be anything save experimental. The vocabulary and parallel idioms should be contained in a German extract, which the pupil should re-write in consecutive narrative or description. Thus he acquires a feeling for the language, a knowledge of the appropriate word and of its use in familiar speech. When the pupil must look to the word of the teacher as the arbiter of the correctness of every expression, confidence in himself is impaired and the spring of successful work lost. Such a necessity would show how imperfectly he is equipped for the work required of him.

Fasnacht's 'German Composition' is in many respects a very serviceable manual, and shows an amount of conscientious work seldom bestowed on a book of this kind. The extracts in the first part are good, the use of parallel passages in German and English for re-writing is retained very successfully. The extracts in the second part from Goldsmith, Macaulay, Irving and others, we cannot commend. The grammatical part is elaborate, with, however, occasional errors in idioms.

More recent competitors in this field are the two works of von Jagemann. These works are in general to be commended. The 'German Prose Composition' contains largely extracts translated into English from the German,

hence they contain few idioms not admitting of ready re-translation. The one criticism which would lie against these selections when considered alone, is that they are uniformly too simple. Mature students will lose their interest in re-telling so many nursery stories. The scholar who expects that his study will contribute to his ability to write a description of life as he is living it will probably be disappointed; he deals with practical things in which fairy lore does not aid him. The book alone lacks variety, lacks a sinewy language to express the experiences which interest men and constitute life. We understand, however, that it represents but a part of the editor's plan and that a second work will contain a variety of selections, illustrating various styles of composition. The vocabulary is very large, and so far as we have tested it satisfactory. This book is accompanied by the authors 'Elements of German Syntax.' The latter presents the leading facts of syntax clearly arranged and with abundant illustrations, the essential point in guiding the student in the use of words and constructions. The work shows industry and skill, and knowledge of a student's needs, while containing nothing but what is familiar. We note that the editor in his treatment of compound verbs adopts a method which he has before advocated, speaking of prefixes as "adverbial and substantive qualifiers" of the simple verb, which it is true they are in part, and treating them under the head of adverbs. His guide to their use here seems to us defective. It would be easy to call attention to statements which might be clearer and more scientific and comprehensive. The treatment of the subjunctive is a case in point. The hypothetical period is treated under the head of the "Potential Subjunctive." There is no mention of the conclusion, and, unless we have overlooked some points in the author's treatment, no mention of the mood in which it is expressed. The incomplete expression of a condition and conclusion is not mentioned. His special class of "verbs of wishing, intending, etc.," is made up of cases of true indirect quotation. Similarly there is no statement concerning the subjunctive in doubtful or incredulous questions implying surprise, and often dissent, on the part of the speaker. The

different uses of the modal auxiliaries are capable of clearer discrimination. The extensive illustrations in this work distinguish it from ordinary grammars and make it a useful, practical companion to any German prose.

Other works having a simple aim to the above, such as that of Beresford-Webb, follow familiar lines and do not require special characterization.

The 'German Prose' of Miss Buchheim, the latest of these works, attempts briefly to guide beginners in writing German and, indirectly, to be an introduction to the larger work of Dr. C. S. Buchheim. Such a book was certainly needed to facilitate the use of its predecessor, an elaborate manual of selections from classical English writers. It is a carefully prepared little book and fulfils well the modest purpose of its editor.

W. T. HEWETT.

Cornell University.

CORRESPONDENCE.

GRUNDRISS DER ROMAN. PHILOLOGIE.

GEEHRTER HERR REDACTEUR:

IN der mir heute zu Gesicht gekommenen Besprechung von Stengel's Metrik aus dem 'Grundriss der romanischen Philologie' (MOD. LANG. NOTES, Bd. 8, No. 7), erklärt der Herr Rezensent es als eine bekannte Thatsache, dass das Erscheinen des 'Grundrisses der romanischen Philologie' wegen Mangel an finanzieller Unterstützung unterbrochen gewesen sei und dass jetzt diese Schwierigkeiten gehoben zu sein schienen.

Ich erlaube mir demgegenüber zu bemerken, dass nie Schwierigkeiten dieser Art bei dem Unternehmen bestanden haben, dass ich keine Unterstützung von irgendwelcher Seite erbeten habe, noch erhalte, dass dies auch durchaus unnötig ist, da die grosse Verbreitung des Grundrisses eine sichere Grundlage abgiebt für den buchhändlerischen Erfolg.

Der *einzig* Grund der Verzögerung in dem Erscheinen des Grundrisses war die Schwierigkeit für die verschiedenen Mitarbeiter, die übernommenen Arbeiten rechtzeitig zu bewältigen. Es ist klar, dass die richtige Abschätzung von vornherein keine leichte Sache

war, und wenn man bedenkt, in welcher umfassenden Weise gerade der Herausgeber, Herr Professor Gröber, an der Mitarbeiterschaft beteiligt ist und welche erstaunliche Arbeitsleistung in seiner 'Geschichte der mittellateinischen Literatur' sich darbietet, so wird es begreiflich erscheinen, dass die Fertigstellung dieser Arbeiten länger gebraucht hat, als vorhergesehen war.

Ich bitte Sie diese Richtigstellung in die nächste Nummer der MOD. LANG. NOTES, aufzunehmen und verbleibe,

KARL J. TRÜBNER.

Strassburg, Germany.

THE PHONETIC SECTION.

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES.

SIRS:—If money enough can be obtained, the Phonetic Section will print a summary of the facts ascertained thus far by means of the various circulars that have been distributed. All persons who are interested in the subject of American pronunciation are invited to contribute something toward defraying the expense of this publication. Any one can become a member of the Section by sending one dollar to the Secretary.

C. H. GRANDGENT, *Secretary.*

Cambridge, Mass.

"FAR FROM THIS."

TO THE EDITORS OF MOD. LANG. NOTES:

SIRS:—I should like to have an opinion, or opinions, on the phrase which follows:—"A says B owes him money; but *far from this being the case*, A owes B money." Can we, without changing the relations of thought, substitute, "the case being far from this"? In other words, does "the case" relate to the real or the alleged fact? The two aspects may be expanded thus:

"The real fact differing widely from the fact alleged,"
" far from this being the case."
"the case being far from this."

If the latter be a correct version, the phrase in question is only an inversion: "far from this | being the case."

WM. HAND BROWNE.

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